

28 14

FOURTEENTH
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN

OF
JAMES MURRAY'S
Royal Asylum for Lunatics.

~~~~~  
**1841.**  
~~~~~

PERTH:
PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTORS,
BY DAVID DRON.

—
1841.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30316960>

FOURTEENTH
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
DIRECTORS AND PHYSICIAN
OF
JAMES MURRAY'S
ROYAL ASYLUM FOR LUNATICS.
JUNE 1841.

THE Directors and Physician of this Asylum have now to present to the public the Fourteenth Annual Report of their proceedings. They are enabled to discharge this duty with the greater pleasure, when they reflect that, although fourteen years have now expired since the Institution was opened, nothing has occurred to limit its general usefulness, or retard its prosperity. During the last twelve months, the same harmony and good order which have happily hitherto attended the management of the Establishment, and which must ever be regarded as so indispensable to its efficiency and welfare, have continued without interruption. The consequence has been, that, as in former years, so during the last, a considerable number of individuals, who were afflicted with what is generally considered one of the most deplorable and hopeless maladies to which

humanity can be subjected, have, through the instrumentality of this Institution, been cured and restored to their friends and society. Stimulated and encouraged by the consideration of the substantial boon which is thus conferred on the community, and profiting by the experience which every additional year furnishes as to the best modes of treating the insane, it is to be hoped that the office-bearers will continue to discharge their important duties with unabated, and even increased vigilance and attention.

It must never be forgotten that the subject of insanity, its causes and varieties, and the nature of the treatment it requires, have only engaged the attention of the medical profession, within whose province it so naturally falls, during a comparatively short space of time. The prejudices of centuries are only yet beginning to disappear before the splendid results of scientific labour; and it is only now, when, in numerous instances, individuals, deprived for a time of the use of reason, are seen, after receiving treatment within the walls of an Asylum, restored to their "right mind," that the tardy acknowledgment is made, that recovery from insanity is, at least, not *impossible*. The Quakers at York were the first who attempted to treat insanity as a disease, and to apply the light of science to the management of the insane. Blows, stripes, and violence, were less used, but still not altogether dispensed with. The extremes of violence, however, fell into disrepute. Samuel Tuke, the Quaker philanthropist, who originated the Retreat, published a history of that Establishment, and detailed the system of management adopted in it. He shewed that it was not necessary for an Asylum to be made to resemble a Prison, but that, on the contrary, the less this appearance was given to it, and the more such a public Institution was made like a private

dwelling-house the better. The book was much read and sought after ; and the plain, unadorned statements of the author carried conviction to the breasts of all those who were open to such. But, men are so apt to run from one extreme to another in all matters, that it is little surprising if, from the extreme of harshness, they should turn round to the entire removal of all mechanical modes of restraint ; and such, in several instances, is stated to be the case. From the first opening of this Asylum to the present day, a mild and modified treatment has been used, and an attempt made to avoid either of the extremes referred to. There has never been a strait-waistcoat within its walls. But, to suppose that a violent maniac, or a suicidal melancholic, is not to be placed under such restraint as to hinder him from injuring himself or others, it is only necessary to carry the matter a little farther, and to say, that the placing such a person in a Madhouse at all is a harsh and uncalled-for restriction.

When in a Madhouse, it is surely the business of those who have the management to employ such mild means as experience has shewn to be best calculated to prevent accidents, to calm down violence, and to soothe the feelings of the unhappy person placed under their charge. And the question seems merely to rest on the better mode of doing this,—whether it is to be done by mild mechanical means, or by the actual force and at the mercy of attendants. The Physician adopted from other Asylums in England and Scotland all that he thought best in every Establishment which he visited ; and when, on certain occasions, the application of restraint has been found necessary, this is only made by consent and under the superintendence of the Physician, the House Surgeon, or the Superintendent and Matron.

It will be remembered that, at the date of the last Annual Report, there remained in the House 135 patients, viz., 71 males and 64 females. During the past year, there have been admitted 37 patients—16 males and 21 females. Twenty-one have been cured, consisting of 7 males and 14 females;—four have been removed by their friends, more or less recovered,—1 male and 3 females; and the total number of patients now in the Asylum is 141. Thus it will be seen that the Institution has not diminished in usefulness, and that the number of its inmates continues gradually and steadily to increase.

In consequence of the extensive improvements formerly made upon the Building, for which a favourable opportunity was afforded by the disastrous fire which took place in the Asylum four years ago, it has not been found necessary, during the past year, to execute many farther alterations. The most important matter which required attention, was the hot-air stove for one department of the House. It was found to be completely decayed, and consequently the Managing Committee found it necessary to contract for the erection of a new stove upon a more improved principle, and thus the House has been rendered more comfortable for the patients. The Directors and Physician always make it their duty to see that every thing connected with the comfort of the patients is carefully attended to; because they are firmly persuaded, both from their own experience, as well as that of others connected with similar institutions, that nothing conduces more to the recovery of the patients than strict attention to their bodily comforts and necessities. Although it has long been known that the insane are able to bear with comparative impunity the extremes of hunger and cold, yet it is now acknowledged that, while want of comfort has the effect of rendering the patient more irascible, want of food only tends

to increase and prolong the disease, when it does not speedily render it fatal. The experience of the Bicêtre in Paris proved that an increase of the allowance of food considerably diminished the number of deaths.

The Directors consider it unnecessary, in this Report, to enter upon a recapitulation of the various interesting and curious cases which present themselves in this Institution of ideal transformations into monarchs, generals, and saints ; because, with certain minor differences, the instances which could be presented would not vary greatly from those which have been described on former occasions. Neither will the limits of this Report permit them to do more than take a passing notice of another interesting subject, namely, as to the different studies and occupations and other causes, which, more than others, predispose to insanity. It is observed by a distinguished writer* that “insanity, in a large proportion of cases, is to be traced to hereditary predisposition ; and this is often so strong that no prominent moral cause is necessary for the production of the case, and probably no moral treatment would have any effect in preventing it. We must, however, suppose that, when a tendency to insanity exists, there may be, in many cases, circumstances in mental habits, or mental discipline, calculated either to favour or counteract the tendency.” The statistical information which is collected by the Physician of this Institution, relative to this and other enquiries, although it does not of course afford the same scope as more extensive Asylums, cannot fail, in the course of a series of years, to be peculiarly interesting. Dr. Pinel, a high authority on the subject of insanity, and who had an opportunity of examining the registers of the Bicêtre at Paris, says “ That he found the num-

* Dr. Abercrombie on Intellectual Powers.

ber of monks and priests was very great ; also a great many country people who had been terrified out of their senses by horrid pictures of futurity ; many artists, as painters, sculptors, and musicians ; some versifiers, in ecstasies with their own productions ; a considerable number of advocates and attornies ; but there did not appear one of those persons accustomed to the equal and habitual exercise of their intellectual faculties ;—not one naturalist, or natural philosopher of ability ; not one chemist, and, for stronger reasons, not one geometrician.” The Directors need scarcely say, that, into this Institution, comparatively limited though it may be, a sprinkling of the same professions and employments has found admission. There have not, indeed, been priests or monks admitted, but a number of those licensed to holy orders in this country have become its inmates. Indeed, the tendency to madness, occasioned by a perversion of theological studies, has been observed in every country and in every age. Several of the second class noticed by Pinel, those terrified by horrid pictures of futurity, have also, from time to time, filled the Asylum ; and almost all the others, not excepting the attornies, have in like manner contributed their quota. It is this promiscuousness and diversity of character and previous employment which render the management of the patients the more difficult and delicate, and which necessarily call for much judicious tact on the part of those to whose care they are entrusted. One thing is much attended to, and cannot be too often inculcated—that is, active and permanent employment, more particularly with hypochondriacal patients. And an observance of the important precept with which Burton concludes his curious work upon Melancholy — “ Be not solitary, be not idle,” is never overlooked.

In former Reports, the subject of early treatment of the in-

sane has been adverted to, and this is what cannot be too often or too forcibly impressed upon the public. In many instances, the Directors have had it reported to them that patients, by the tardiness, or false delicacy of their relations, in applying for their admission into the Asylum, have become confirmed in their insanity, and rendered obstinate and perverse in their whims and caprices, who, there is every reason to think, if subjected to early treatment, would have been much more easily recovered, and their eccentricities and bad habits more easily removed. The Directors may also, in passing, notice the vulgar notion that insanity can never be cured, because, as it is alleged, it is always certain of returning. The experience of this Institution has shewn very decidedly that, although there are a few instances of relapse, nothing can be more unfounded than the idea that this forms more than an *exception* to the rule, and it is therefore quite unpardonable in the friends of the insane to deprive them of the benefit of treatment which may probably issue in their final recovery.

During the past year, the attention of the Superintendent and Matron to their respective duties has merited the approval of the Directors; and the conduct of the inferior officers and servants has also been satisfactory. The Chaplain is attentive to his duties, and it is hoped that much good has been accomplished by the appointment of this functionary in the Institution.

And the Directors, in conclusion, would only now congratulate themselves and the public on possessing an Institution so valuable and so useful within this County,—one which they feel warranted in saying that though it may be equalled, cannot be surpassed in any part of the empire. The vast importance of an Asylum for the insane can only be fully appreciated by those

whose relations have required the benefit of such a retreat. Of the numerous “ills that flesh is heir to”, insanity is perhaps the most distressing. When the kind and affectionate parent is transformed into the furious and implacable foe,—when the love and tenderness of a wife or husband is changed for rudeness and insolence, or when cheerfulness and contentment are substituted for gloomy melancholy, and, perhaps, a misanthropic dislike of this world and its inhabitants,—who can estimate the bitterness and anguish of the afflicted relations, and the comfort they must experience in knowing, that those whose happiness is so intimately connected with their own, have an asylum to resort to where they will be cared for by night and day,—their every want supplied;—their failings and prejudices not unnecessarily contradicted, and every device adopted which human ingenuity or skill can suggest for their cure and recovery to the world. That this Institution possesses these advantages, it is comfortable for the Directors to know; and they fondly hope that, through the blessing of God, it will long continue to secure those benefits to the community.

It now only remains once more to record their best thanks to the Physician and House Surgeon for their able and judicious management during the past year, and to the Superintendent and Matron for the faithful and upright manner in which they have filled their offices.

TABLE FIRST.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Number of Patients remaining in the Asylum, 8th June, 1840,.....	71	64	135
Number admitted from 8th June, 1840, to 12th June, 1841,.....	16	21	37

TABLE SECOND.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Cured from 8th June 1840 to 12th June 1841,.....	7	14	21
Removed by their friends,.....	1	3	4
Died,.....	4	2	6
Dismissed by order of Committee,....	0	0	0
Remaining 12th June 1841,.....	75	66	141

